

# 15 Minutes of Fame Leaves Sailor Lame

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We all have dreams of being famous. Some even have dreams of being a daredevil or a stuntman—it seemed like the EW2 in this story did, anyway.

All the script required him to do was carry a few items up a vertical ladder. Imagining the director sitting in his chair and the cameras rolling, the EW2 proceeded up the ladder. Because he wanted to impress the director for a future casting job, the EW2 loaded his one arm to capacity. He used the technique of a one-armed bandit to slowly but surely climb to the top.

“Now for my 15 minutes of fame,” the EW2 perhaps thought. “All I have to do is fall just right, and I’m a shoo-in for a future job—maybe in the next ‘Star Wars’ movie.”

He started falling backward. With a keen eye, he spied a rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB) one deck below, so he hurled his body clear of the handrail and reached out for the RHIB. He missed it, though, and fell 25 feet like the hapless coyote we have come to love in TV cartoons. On film, the stunt would have looked perfect: plenty of blood, lots of screaming, and the sirens of rescue vehicles howling in the background. But the blood and screams weren’t staged.

Because he didn’t want to make two trips up the ladder or do the unmanly thing and ask someone to help him, the EW2 won a trip to a hospital in an ambulance. Injuries included lacerated buttocks (from hitting the edge of the ladder while going to the RHIB), ligament damage to his left knee, and contusions to his head, arms and shoulders. Since leaving

Navy photo by PH2 Felix Garza



A Sailor climbs a vertical ladder in an escape trunk with his arms and hands free. The one in the story climbed a vertical ladder on a weather deck with one arm loaded to capacity. He paid for this mistake with multiple injuries.

the ship, he has had numerous surgeries to his knee and continues in rehab.

Most times, we do things because people say, “It’s the way we’ve done it before” or because it’s easier than asking someone for help. Let us apply this thinking to a tribe of people from long ago. One day, a hut with all their pigs in it burned down. While cleaning up after the fire, they discovered roast pig and had a feast. From then on, anytime they wanted roast pig, they burned down a hut.

The old way isn’t always the best way. Spend a few minutes looking at every situation and job and see if you can’t make it safer for you and the next person. Navy people do a lot of jobs no one else will do because of the risks involved. We do them because we’ve found ways to reduce the risks. However, this doesn’t mean we can’t find even better ways. In looking for a better way, we also might find a safer way. Let’s save our huts to hold the feast in. 🍖